

**BEGINNINGS**  
**The passages of a new loving relationship**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Tracy L. Simon

Cindy Miller, Thesis Advisor

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

July, 1991

## Introduction

*Love is such a tissue of paradoxes,  
and exists in such an endless variety  
of forms and shades that you may say almost  
anything about it that you please  
and it is likely to be correct.*

Henry Finck  
*Romantic Love and Personal  
Beauty (1902)*

According to Walster and Walster (1978), 97 percent of Americans fall in love at least once in their lifetime. Although love may seem mysterious and instantaneous, falling in love is a process that involves both psychological and social factors (Devault and Strong, 1988). These factors seem to follow a general pattern of development.

Love is a learned response (Miller and Siegel, 1972). In other words, love is largely a product of experience. Anthropologists insist that some types of love are actually nonexistent in primitive cultures (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972).

Not only does our culture tell us that love exists, it also gives us a rough idea as to when it's appropriate to feel love and when it isn't. In childhood, we painstakingly learn what emotions are appropriate in relationship situations. We learn when to feel joyful or sad, fearful or secure, excited or bored. We also learn romance. And our experiences greatly influence our ideas about love (Miller and Siegel, 1972).

Like hunger or thirst, love is also motivating. When received, it fulfills a basic need and is responded to by human emotion. Harry and Margaret

Harlow showed that what is really important for the development of love is that we have someone who is comforting (Harlow, 1958).

Love is not a single concept, but is multidimensional (Strong and Devault, 1988). Similarly, the loving relationship passes through a series of stages, along with its own set of internal dynamics and its own ongoing agenda (Scarf, 1987). The stages move progressively from the idealistic phase to the transitional phase, then to the productive phase.

In actuality, love relationships are vehicles of personal growth (Walster and Walster, 1978). It is through participation in relationships that one progresses to the next stage of psychological development in the life cycle. Therefore, it is important to understand, not only the styles, but also the development of a growing love relationship.

### **Styles of Love**

According to sociologist John Lee (1973), romantic love comes in six different forms:

- EROS: love of beauty
- MANIA: obsessive love
- LUDIS: playful love
- STORGE: companionate love
- AGAPE: altruistic love
- PRAGMA: realistic love

Erotic lovers feel an immediate, powerful attraction to beautiful people. They speak with delight of their lovers' hair, skin, fragrance, muscles, and body proportions. Erotic lovers are fascinated by every aspect of their beloved. They want to know every detail about them, to become a part of them. They delight in sexual intimacy and romance. Usually, erotic love burns intensely and then dies (Lee, 1973). Only rarely does the initial rapture blossom into a more lasting love.

Ludic lovers enjoy playful, challenging, nonpossessive kinds of love. They are careful not to become too attached to their partners or allow their lovers to become too interpersonally dependent. They arrange casual encounters and usually date several partners at one time. Ludic lovers refuse to mention any long-range plans (Lee, 1973).

Storge is "love without fever"-the kind of feelings you might have for a brother or sister. Storge often encroaches our lives unobserved. The couple begins as friends, and come to enjoy each other more and more. Gradually, their friendship deepens into love. This love is a companionate, comfortable affectionate type of intimacy (Lee, 1973). Even if they decide to separate as lovers, they remain good friends.

The manic lover is consumed by thoughts of the beloved. The slightest lack of enthusiasm from the partner brings anxiety and pain, furious jealousy, loss of appetite, and heartache. Any sign of warmth brings instant relief, albeit a temporary condition. The manic lover's need for affection and attention from the beloved is insatiable. Feelings are beyond rational control. This stressful love rarely ends happily (Lee, 1973).

The pragma lover takes a logical approach to love. From the onset, they rationally evaluate the partners strengths and weaknesses to determine suitability. They search for someone whose personality, background, education, religious views, interests, and the like will be compatible with their own. Once a sensible choice is made, more intense feelings may have an opportunity to develop (Lee, 1973).

Agape is the classical Christian form of love. It is love that is patient and kind, undemanding of reciprocity. Agape involves caring and sensitivity for another whether they are deserving of their love or not. This love is more of an ideal, for agape in its pure form is virtually non-existent (Lee, 1973).

Many types of love can be found in one relationship. Research by Reedy (cited in Rice, 1990) emphasizes the need for balance between the loving styles. The most complete love will include elements of all six types. The primary type of lover each partner is can be either a negative or positive attribute of the relationship. Lee (1973) claims that "the way to have a mutually satisfying love affair is to find a partner who shares the same approach to loving, the same definition of love."

## **Development of Love**

### **Idealistic Phase**

People do a number of things that indicate the beginning of a love relationship. The more an individual likes or loves someone, the more we tend

to look at that person. We also tend to stand closer to people we are in love with (Masters and Johnson, 1974).

Physical attractiveness is particularly significant during the initial meeting and early stages of the relationship. You tend to judge strangers or people you do not know well on their physical appearance. Humans unconsciously infer qualities based on looks (Dion, et al, 1972). This inference is referred to as the halo effect. We assume that people who are physically appealing to us possess more desirable social characteristics than people whom we consider unattractive (Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986).

The initial attraction brings more intimacy with each subsequent meeting. The two individuals are learning more and more about each other. In addition to this learning process, each partner is still trying very hard to be just what the other wants.

Falling in love is an expression signifying the possession of some external force (Otto, 1972). Lovers may fall desperately in love with someone they barely know. We put them on the plane of a god or goddess. They are viewed as flawless. The man or woman instantaneously satisfies all of our unspoken, fleeting and extravagant desires. Being in love is regarded as a transcendent state of self, emotionally intense beyond ordinary standards of pain and pleasure. This mode is approved highly as the standard for a relationship in our culture. The association between romantic love and the process of mate selection is impractical, but nevertheless what our culture deems appropriate (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972).

Carl Rogers (1972) referred to this beginning stage as "the period of

social oughts". Most of the couple's behavior and expectations were a reflection of predetermined social rules. Each partner has a set idea about how to act and feel toward the other. Not only parents, but society, enforces a specific structure of social rules to mold relationships. This structure becomes the basis of many loving relationships. Unfortunately, this structure also seems doomed to collapse (Masters and Johnson, 1974).

The type of love in the first phase of a loving relationship is romantic love. Its primary characteristics are an extremely emotional state, a whirlwind of tenderness and sexuality, elation and pain, anxiety and relief, altruism and jealousy (Kelley, 1979). Romantic love has also been described as a profoundly tender or passionate affection for another person (Kantor and Okun, 1989). This love is characterized by strong emotion and intense feelings. A little glance or smile from the beloved may arouse a whirlwind of emotions. Because of the intensity, there is a great desire for the couple to be together. When apart, lovers frequently become obsessed by thoughts of one another. It is also common for physiological changes to occur: quickening pulse, breathlessness, trembling, a tightness in the chest, or halting speech (Masters, Johnson, and Kolondy, 1986). Sometimes the love felt is so intense, it borders with pain (Perlman and Duck, 1987).

In such a state of passion, it is probably inevitable that romantic love is accompanied by much idealization and adoration. The lover becomes the incarnation of all of those qualities that are one's ideal of womanhood or manhood. For at least a while, the feelings are completely out of rational control, and the ups and downs of feelings can interfere with work, study, and

sleep (Rice, 1990).

People generally expect that the relationship will satisfy most of their basic needs (Crosby, 1973). They expect their partner to meet their physical needs, their romance needs, their communication needs, their sharing needs, their economic needs, and their social needs. When couples are at the romantic peak, they desire ownership of the mate (Walster and Walster, 1978). Couples want total exclusivity and absolute fidelity. They reject any self-identity and create a couple-identity. There are few societies that expect as much from a loving relationship as Americans (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972).

Early in the relationship, couples expect the other mate to give them purpose and meaning in life. They instantly expect love and affection, social acceptance, and status (Walster and Walster, 1978). This false notion of total security is widely accepted because it is what society enforces. In actuality, the partners have to create these things. It does not simply appear because an individual is attracted to another. It takes time, patience, and work--lots of it.

Listed below are some of the idealistic beliefs that direct a new relationship (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972):

1. Love will last forever.
2. Love will bring total happiness and security.
3. The mate belongs to you.
4. Love means no more loneliness.
5. The mate would rather be with you at all times.
6. You can adjust to each other without arguments.
7. It is not love if there is any conflict.



8. Sacrifice is a measure of true love.
9. The mate will never be attracted to another person.
10. The mate can fulfill every need.

This is a truly exciting stage of the relationship. However, it is not based on real knowledge of the other, nor is it stable (Rogers, 1972). Two things are happening. Initially, each judged the other to be sexually and socially desirable. Therefore, the mutual interest is rewarding. In addition, each has formed an unrealistic and inaccurate picture of the other, closely matching what each wants the other to be like. Both are in a stage of total exhilaration-until the masks are lowered.

Often, both people involved in the relationship put on a facade, a misleading image, to draw the other person closer. As time passes, the true image of the perfect mate is unmasked. What usually follows for the other lover is a feeling of letdown and bitter disappointment. This unmasking often signals the end of a new relationship.

The problem with the first phase of an intimate relationship is that, from day one, the couple is in a static state of being, a constant pattern of fulfillment (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972). This expectation not only falsely represents a realistic relationship, but can prove to be quite damaging. It places great restrictions on both mates and stifles creativity and spontaneity.

The promise of security and constancy of love can be found only in ourselves, not from an intimate other (Walster and Walster, 1978). In order for the relationship to endure, mates must put aside unrealistic expectations and fairy-tale ideals, and strive to understand the reality of an intimate relationship.

### **Transitional Phase**

Many myths of love and passion in our society are buried below consciousness (Kantor and Okun, 1989). If the new relationship doesn't enact exactly the way the tale does, the couple inevitably faces disappointment. How each mate creates and manages this disillusionment ultimately determines whether each will experience maturation or stagnation in the relationship.

Inevitably, reality will creep into the relationship. Illusion cannot be sustained forever. The initial thrill of mutual attraction will start to wear off. The couple might become more complacent, and therefore not try as hard to continue to impress one another. This is a natural occurrence that usually brings the relationship to crisis (Aron and Aron, 1986). If there is a large discrepancy between the reality and the image, it will be very difficult to overcome the disappointment. If the fantasy image is not matched with reality at least to some extent, love will not survive.

The descent to disappointment and disenchantment during the transitional phase inevitably comes with the passage of time. The couple discovers that the person of their dreams is not precisely the same as the partner in reality. This sometimes feels like a betrayal (Rogers, 1972). The recognition of the mate's essential differences from the idealized image that one had is what is hard to bear. The mate will either try to change the partner to conform more with the fantasy, or accept the partner for whom he or she is.

The decline of idealistic love is often experienced as a crisis in a relationship (Rice, 1990). The couple must realize that the intensity of passion does not measure depth of love. One can be sure that intensity diminishes

over time. It is then that we begin to discover if the love we experience is one that will endure. Couples who survive the beginning crises must find other ways of relating (Rogers, 1978). The new structure must be more realistic and durable. The couple needs to commit themselves to working together on the changing process of the relationship, because the relationship is enriching their love and life and they wish it to grow. Rogers (1972) explains that commitment is individual, but it is necessary that the constant work of a growing relationship be done together.

It is important to realize that love changes over a period of time for all persons. Idealistic love grows more rational and less wildly romantic. Abraham Maslow (1968) suggested that romantic, idealistic love is deficiency-love, whereas productive love is being-love. Deficiency-love is basically selfish, based on needs that the other person can fulfill. Frequently, the other person is regarded as an object. The other person is wanted for the purpose of sexual gratification, financial assistance, guidance, and caring of earthly needs. In contrast, being-love is rich, giving, and nonpossessive. It is given without any desire for return, with no need motivation existing. Being love requires openness, knowledge, and maturity of both individuals involved. It also requires time to develop and grow within a rewarding relationship.

Love will grow and endure only if a transformation is made from deficiency, or romantic, love to being, or productive, love. J.K. Folsom (quoted in Walster and Walster, 1978) explains, "Love grows less exciting for the same biological reasons that the second run on a fast toboggan slide is less exciting than the first. The diminished excitement, however, may increase the

real pleasure."

Many people find that productive love can include romance. David Knox (1970) examined dating relationships, couples married for less than five years, and couples married more than twenty. He found that romance did not die. Instead, it became transformed to include more realistic elements of life. The key to an enduring relationship is not romantic intensity but the caring, commitment, and self-disclosure that comes from deep, intimate, productive love.

Unfortunately, many relationships never get passed the idealistic phase. Some people are incapable of mature, productive love. A self-defeating attitude is not rare, nor is it readily changed (Crosby, 1973). For such people, every relationship seems empty and unsatisfying. They do not value themselves, and therefore cannot accept and value love from another.

Human beings with the most satisfying relationships value love but see it only as one aspect of his or her self. Idealistic love sees the relationship as an institution for satisfying all intimacy needs. In actuality, many relationships, such as friendships, are also necessary for need fulfillment (Walster and Walster, 1978; Rogers, 1972)

The decline of idealistic love, then, enables individuals to refocus their relationship. They are given the opportunity to move from an intense togetherness excluding others to a relationship that looks outward together and includes family, friends, and external projects.

### **Productive Phase**

True development of love follows on the heels of the idealistic and transitional phases. Each person must develop the ability to serve as a generalized reinforcer for the other (Miller and Siegel, 1972). The couple must build up a substantial history of making the other happy and comfortable, including making the partner feel more adequate (Masters and Johnson, 1974). Sincere interest in the partner, a genuine concern for feelings, and an honest respect of opinions make for conditions that help the other to feel more adequate. Enhancing each other's enjoyment in shared activities, and taking care to please each other in direct ways contributes more to a relationship than idealistic love. The couple knows that humans can only rely on two realistic expectations. Those expectations are change and growth (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972).

Erikson (1959) argues that it is "only after a reasonable sense of identity has been established that real intimacy with another is possible." As an intimate relationship develops, changes take place that are unique, and not seen in other types of relationships. For example, interaction increases in terms of the frequency, duration, and number of settings in which it occurs. The interdependence and the sense of togetherness experienced by each mate increases. As a result, the extent of caring, commitment, and trust increase. Finally, the partners see the relationship as irreplaceable, or at least special.

Companionate love is the primary focus in the productive phase. It is a stable emotion. Companionate, or productive love is a friendly affection and deep attachment to someone (Devault and Strong, 1988). It requires two

people with common concerns and similar interests. Most humans can make a sharp distinction between our passionate feelings and our companionate ones (Walster & Walster, 1978).

Ira Reiss sees productive love in its sociological context, as an expression of a maturing interaction between two individuals (Kelley, 1974). He proposes a four-step development of productive love. Reiss calls these four processes-rapport, self revelation, mutual dependency, and intimacy need fulfillment-the wheel theory to emphasize their interdependence (Reiss, 1980). A reduction in any one affects the development or maintenance of the love relationship. The process flows in one direction to develop and maintain love, and flows in the opposite direction to weaken the bond. Sociocultural background and role conceptions influence all four processes, for they define what is expected of the partner in the love relationship (Reiss, 1980).

Rapport is the first step identified by Reiss. Individuals can not develop a love relationship with someone who is repugnant to us. Rapport is a sense of ease, the feeling that two individuals truly understand each other. There must be an attraction, a feeling of closeness that makes us enjoy another's company and want to explore and deepen the relationship. If rapport is created, people are more likely to disclose their intimate feelings. Individuals find it easy to talk with this newly discovered partner, and seek opportunities to be with this person because of the satisfaction they receive.

A second step in the development of love is the process of self-revelation. When people feel at ease with another person and the number of opportunities for intimate sharing increase, they want to express more freely

their inner thoughts and feelings. This is an answer to the problem of alienation in our times. The ability to reveal yourself frankly and confidently gives life an entirely different complexion. A relationship develops where the couple, deeply absorbed in a conversation and so enraptured with each other, are oblivious of time or place (Reiss, 1980).

The third stage is mutual dependency. Because individuals find rapport and the possibility of self-revelation with so few people, the discovery and creation of such a love relationship inevitably means that they come to rely more and more on their partner. Dependency develops when one's needs are fulfilled by another person. This is the type of love a child feels for the mother who feeds and clothes it (Perlaman and Duck, 1987). But it also is the kind of love that develops when the intense psychological needs of adults, which have been denied in the past, now become fulfilled by a mate. They depend on each other for understanding, support, encouragement and sympathy. Each becomes the other's confidant. This stage is characteristic of satisfying relationships (Devault and Strong, 1988).

A final phase in the development of love is personality need fulfillment. Potentialities that have been previously dormant and untouched are opened for growth and fulfillment. If the relationship continues to grow, the wheel of love continues to turn-toward continued rapport, expanded self-revelation, further mutual dependency, and a more complete personality need fulfillment (Reiss, 1980).

Unfortunately, as Reiss points out, the progress of this productive relationship may be reversed and the partners pulled apart by conflicting forces and

interests. Events can weaken rapport and confidence. Dishonesty or cruelty can drive an individual away from the loved one. Self revelation may turn out to be self-exposure, opening individuals up to possible hurt or shame. Mutual dependency may reveal our insecurity or the instability of the partner. Even the need fulfillment of personal needs may take place at the expense of the loved one rather than as a truly mutual accomplishment of both mates (Reiss, 1980). The couples have passed successfully through the other phases, but there is no guarantee of endurance in any point of a growing relationship.

### Elements of Mature Love

The search for enduring love might be characterized as the search for maturity in love. Mature love is the kind of love that does not change with the seasons or with changing circumstances, but accepts life both at its best and at its worst (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972). It is a love that may develop slowly and without a lot of excitement, but builds surely into a deep and meaningful relationship. Three basic elements are especially basic to attaining maturity in love.

One element of mature love is a mutual sense of personal worth and respect. If one depreciates their own value and is unsure of their own identity, they cannot truly love. Or if the mate is not seen as a person of value and integrity, the love will not grow and mature. This is a feeling that must be shared by both partners, as each looks forward to shared joys and sorrows.

The growth of a mutual sense of personal worth cannot be accomplished quickly. During the first phase, couples often make an extra effort to put forth



the best side of their personalities and to accept the other with a minimum amount of criticism or objective evaluation (Walster and Walster, 1978).

A second element of mature love is empathy. One must have the ability to feel and understand the feelings and attitudes of the other (Otto, 1972). Only rarely are most human beings able to express in words how they feel and think. Most people count on others to understand our behavior on the basis of nonverbal communication. More specifically, facial expressions, movement, or the different tempo from which people go from one task or another can be used to identify an individual's mood. Individuals need to know someone cares about their personal needs and shares their problems (Sarf, 1987).

A third element of mature love is commitment. Love is nurtured by a willingness to accept responsibility and to give oneself genuinely to the success of the relationship (Walster and Walster, 1978). Both mates must determine to build and maintain their love and their relationship through the years. This perseverance goes hand and hand with maturity, and is often associated with the desire to honor ideals of infidelity and responsibility.

Clearly, these elements do not develop instantaneously. The spark of physical attraction can certainly come quickly, as we have the ability to react to physical encounters positively or negatively at once. However, the process of getting to know the other intellectually and emotionally is much more time consuming. Therefore, the evaluation of these aspects come at a much later date Masters, Johnson, Kolondy, 1986).

If all goes well during this stage, other processes are also taking place. The couple are doing things together. They are both getting a large measure of

enjoyment out of shared activities. If they are compatible, they are truly enjoying each other's company and building up a large store of shared pleasant experiences. The more the couple realizes that they are actually successful in pleasing each other, the better that fact alone will make them feel. Being able to give pleasure to someone who is important to us can be very rewarding (Rice, 1990). It validates our own worth. Thus, giving to another becomes an important part of the rewards of the loving relationship.

Important in the long term are shared experiences that prove mutually satisfying. For this reason, lovers must share common interests. Each partner must make a deliberate effort to help satisfy the other's needs, and to heighten the others feelings of self-worth and attractiveness (Walster and Walster, 1978). The fading of the original thrill of mutual discovery and attraction can be replaced by consciously learning how to make the other person simply feel good about him- or herself. This can be as direct as praise, or as subtle as paying attention at the appropriate moments.

Mature love is in many ways an expression of what we feel most deeply about life and its meaning. When we develop a growing, sharing, trusting, caring, honest, free and mature relationship with another, we feel ourselves to be very close to the secret of what it means to be a human being (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972).

**The Difference Between Idealistic Love and Productive Love  
(From Kelley, 1979)**

**Idealistic Love**

1. Love is born at first sight and will conquer all.
2. Love demands exclusive attention and devotion and is jealous of outsiders.
3. Love is characterized by exploitation and direct need gratification. striving for recompense.
4. Love is built on physical attraction and sexual gratification. Sex often dominates the relationship.
5. Love is static and ego-centric. Change is sought in the partner in order to satisfy one's own needs and desires.
6. Love is romanticized. The couple do not face reality or are frightened by it.
7. Love is irresponsible and fails to consider the future consequences of today's actions.

**Productive Love**

1. Love is developing relationship and deepens with shared experiences.
2. Love is built on self-acceptance and is unselfish with others.
3. Love seeks to aid and strengthen the loved one without constant
4. Love includes sexual satisfaction, but not to the exclusion of sharing in other ways.
5. Love is a growing and developing reality. Love expands to include the growth and creativity.
6. Love enhances reality and makes the partners more complete and adequate persons.
7. Love is responsible and gladly accepts the consequences of mutual involvement.

## Conclusion

Love is something that grows through self-expansion, and relationships are substantial means of individual growth (Aron and Aron, 1986). The concept of oneness with another is not only a romantic myth, but a potentially damaging one. The oneness concept is only found in fairy tales. The purpose of a relationship should not be to lose self-identity in favor of a couple-identity, but for two people to grow together as individuals (O'Neill and O'Neill, 1972). The idea of two individuals growing together is a realistic, mature, and worthwhile pursuit.

## Bibliography

Aron, A. and Aron, E. (1986). Love and the Expansion of Self.

New York: Hemisphere.

Crosby, J. (1973). Illusion and Disillusion. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Devault, C. and Strong, B. (1988). Understanding our Sexuality.

New York: West.

Dion, K. et al. (1972). "What is Beautiful is Good." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 24, 285-290.

Erikson, E. (1959). Identity and the life cycle. Psychological Issues, 1(1).

Harlow, H. (1958). "The Nature of Love." American Psychologist, 13, 673- 685.

Hatfield, E. and Sprecher, S. (1986). "Mirror, Mirror. The Importance of Looks in Everyday Life." Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

Kantor, D. and Okun, B. (1989). Intimate Environments. New York: Guilford.

Kelley, R. (1979). Courtship, Marriage, and the Family.

New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Knox, D. (1970). "Conceptions of Love at Three Developmental Levels." Family Coordinator, 19, 151-156.

Lee, J. (1973). The Colours of Love. Toronto, Canada: New Press.

Maslow, Abraham. (1968). Toward a Psychology of Being.

New York: Van Nostrand.

Masters, W. and Johnson, V. (1974). The Pleasure Bond. New York: Bantam.

- Masters, W. Johnson, V. and Kolodny, R. (1986). Masters and Johnson on Sex and Human Loving. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Miller, H. and Siegel, P. (1972). Loving: A Psychological Approach. New York: Wiley and Sons.
- O'Neill, G. and O'Neill, N. (1972). Open Marriage. New York: M. Evans.
- Otto, H. (1972). Love Today. New York: Association Press.
- Perlman, D. and Duck, S. eds. (1987). Intimate Relationships. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Reiss, I. (1980). Family Systems in America. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Rice, F. (1990). Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families. Mountain View, California: Mayfield.
- Rogers, C. (1972). Becoming Partners: Marriage and its Alternatives. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Scarf, M. (1987). Intimate Partners. New York: Random House.
- Walster, E. and Walster, W. (1978). A New Look at Love. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.